10: Browne D-5 (1893) 1894
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Inishbofin

164 very even and white, and seem to last well; even men of over sixty
[142] often have good incisors; but many suffer from toothache. Abscess of the alveolus, unlike what is seen in Aran, is not at all common.

Skin.—Ulcers due to the friction of ropes and of the thick home-spun clothing when wet, eczema, "sea-boils," scabies, and acne, are frequently met with, as is anthrax or carbuncle; but, perhaps, the most common of all skin affections, especially among the younger members of the population, is tinea tonsurans. Alopecia areata, whether caused by the last-mentioned affection or not, seems to be common. Uterine troubles are not at all common. Venereal diseases are practically unknown.

164 *Accidents* arising out of the surroundings and occupation of the
752 people are, as might be expected, very numerous. These are burns, severe cuts from reaping hooks, injuries inflicted by domestic animals, and, above all, contusions and fractures due in most cases to falls from rocks and ponies.

181 4. *Psychology.*—For one who has had only a short experience of the people this very difficult and delicate point is exceedingly hard to deal justly with, but the following description, for the most part obtained from local sources, both on the islands and on the opposite part of the mainland, and to some small degree from personal observation, is believed to be accurate as far as it goes.

[609] To strangers, the people are not, at first, attractive, as their manner is shy and not unmarked by suspicion; but after this reserve is broken through they reveal themselves in a much more attractive light, and are kindly, courteous, and very communicative.

Among themselves they are cheerful and social, given much to
[517] gossip and chaff, though their wit is not of a very sparkling character. They contrast strongly with the Aran Islanders in their taste for music and dancing, concertinas and melodions being in common use in several houses.

181 In their dealings with one another they are honest and fair, even
674 a petty theft being an extremely rare occurrence. As to their dealings with the people of the mainland, the usual hostile statements, common
[609] with all insular communities, are made by both sides with respect to each others honesty, but much reliance cannot be put in these vague assertions. Crime is almost unknown, and the administration of justice is seldom called into requisition, and then only for small quarrels among neighbours.

11: Browne D-5 (1894) 1895
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Kilmore

"Constitutional" diseases.—Phthisis and struma are stated to be comparatively rare. 164

Malignant disease is very common in the Mullet, especially in the electoral district of Binghamstown South, which includes all the southern part of the peninsula. The majority of these cases are said to fall into the hands of "cancer curers," who use arsenic paste.

Rheumatism is one of the most prevalent troubles, especially in the elderly and old.

"Gravel" is a common complaint all over the district, and a good many deaths from this cause are registered.

Dietetic diseases.—Digestive troubles are very common everywhere, but more especially in the inland parts where the dietary is less varied; "boxty," or potato-bread and the abuse of strong tea seem to be very largely responsible. 164 292

Along the coast, ento-parasites, due to the large proportion of fish in the dietary, are of very frequent occurence.

Respiratory diseases.—Bronchitis is very prevalent in the winter and spring, and spasmodic asthma is stated to be not an uncommon affection. 164

Local affections are few and not very serious. Conjunctivitis is common, and much aggravated by the peat-smoke of the houses.

As regards dental troubles, the people are by no means free from these, though as a rule the teeth are even and white, and remain sound until late in life. [142]

"Female" troubles seem to be very common.

Venereal diseases are practically non-existant.

Skin.—Skin diseases are very prevalent. Among these the most common are—tinea tonsurans, eczema, sea boils, and scabies.

Accidental injuries.—Owing to the mode of life of the people and their environment, accidents frequently happen, especially fractures and contusions from falls, bites and other injuries from domestic animals, and burns. [152]

4. *Psychology.*—The difficulties of treating this part of the subject justly are, in the case of a stranger, very great, as his acquaintance with the people cannot be of sufficiently long standing to allow of the knowledge of more than the superficial part of their character, while, in the case of a resident, personal likes and antipathies, and local quarrels or friendships, largely influence his opinions. 181

The following description, though to some extent derived from personal observation, is for the most part obtained from several local

11: Browne D-5 (1894) 1895
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
Kilmore

845 In cases of difficult labour a ploughman may be called in to lift and shake the woman gently, which it is thought will produce the desired effect. The reason given is that as he shakes and scatters the seed on the earth, so also he ought to produce a good effect here.

● [752] A nail which has got into the foot is always thrown into the fire.

Leechcraft.—Though regular medical assistance is usually sought 757 for serious complaints, yet, the more common ailments are often 278 treated by the people themselves, several of the older men and women enjoying some local celebrity for this.

The following list of substances used medicinally was collected; it is believed to be but a small fraction of the local pharmacopœia.

(a.) Animal substances.—Saliva is used for many purposes; thus button scurvy is treated by spitting on the floor and rubbing on the mixed saliva and dust with the right thumb.

Seal oil is rubbed in for sprains and rheumatism, for which it has a great reputation locally; it is sold in Belmullet at a pretty high price.

The tongue of a fox is used as a poultice to extract thorns, &c.

(b.) Herbs.—Mr. Nolan kindly provided the following list of plants in use in the district, most of which he has seen used. The qualities of many of these were also described to me by several of the country people.

Dandelion (*Leontodon taraxacum*), used for "liver troubles."

Comfrey (*Symphytum officinale*), used as a styptic.

Samphire (*Crithmum maritimum*), used, boiled in milk, for heart-burn.

Self-heal (locally called Heartsease) (*Brunella vulgaris*), used for palpitations.

Mountain sage (*Teucrium scorodonia*), used "for the heart" and in cough mixtures.

Ground-wood, or Bog-bark (not identified), used for gravel (boiled in milk).

Bugloss (*Echium* or *Lycopsis*), used, in poultices with oat-meal, for abscesses, &c.

Ground-ivy (*Nepeta glechoma*), used, as a "tea," for "heart heat," or mixed with other herbs for a cough.

Nettles (*Urtica dioica*), used, with ginger, for "wind on the stomach."

Ivy (*Hedera helix*), leaves used as a cap for a "scabby head."

Burdock root (*Arctium lappa*),
Furze tops (*Ulex*),
Broom (*Cytisus scoparius*),
Carragheen moss (*Sphærococcus europæus*),
} usually combined and boiled with sugar-stick to form a cough-syrup.

14: Westropp B-4, 5 (no date)1910-12
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Clare

Plants.—The "hungry grass" grows on mountains, and, if trodden on, causes a sickening hunger which kills if not relieved. I knew a man in County Limerick who said he "knew it to happen to another man" on the Clare hills, and the victim got food in bare time to save him.[50] Seven stripes of a plantain leaf stop the bleeding of a bad wound. The "Seven Sisters" plant for healing purposes must be picked at a particular period of the sun and moon in August. Fern "dust" (seeds) heals cuts from rushes; the dock charms nettle stings; and the four-leafed shamrock brings luck if found accidentally. The belief that house-leek preserves a house from burning[51] is widespread in north and east Clare. The pennywort has a sectarian bias, and only cures Protestants,[52] and this is connected near Bunratty with a curious legend of Anne Boleyn. This hapless queen, after enjoying by means of the plant the greatest influence over her terrible spouse,[53] "got into trouble, but, when she was sent to jail, she couldn't get the plant, and they hanged her." The rowan, or mountain ash, is a luck-bringer and preservative from magic, and I remember small forked twigs being carried. A rowan, planted at Iniscaltra about 890 by King Cormac mac Cuileanan, bore apples.[54] Moss from a skull, or an ancient cross such as that at Dysert O'Dea, or a pillar, is curative; the moss at Fortanne well was used for the eyes, but had to be replaced. If you see a "button mushroom" you should pluck it, as "it will never grow any more once it is looked at."[55]

THOS. J. WESTROPP.

(*To be continued.*)

[P 252]

16:Messenger E-4,5 (1955-1966) 1969 ER6 Rural Irish ER6
(1959-1960) Inis Beag

and other Christian vices are detested and are likely to become the butt of satirical anecdotes and ballads.

In many primitive and peasant societies, in which Christianity has dispossessed polytheistic religions, it has been observed that polytheism has left a legacy whereby the Virgin Mary and various angels and saints are worshipped as dispensers of personal power in their own right. This has been extended to the Trinity among the Anang of Nigeria, who believe that God provided independent power for his human son, Jesus, with which to convert the world to Christianity, and for the Holy Spirit (who has joined the indigenous pantheon of spirits) to act for mankind as healer, prognosticator, forgiver of sins, and protector against ghosts, witches, and sorcerers (Messenger 1959:291). Most Inis Beag folk regard God and the Devil, among Christian supernatural beings, as the only possessors of personal power. But some think that power emanating from the deity is manipulated by the Blessed Virgin and particular saints, and they as well as he must be propitiated for best results. When asked why she prayed to St. Enda rather than to other saints, an old woman said that this saint is "nearer to God" and therefore able to capture more of his power than others. A few islanders hold that these intermediary entities possess power not emanating from the deity, and thus may be approached individually through prayer and sacrifice for their favor. The saints most often appeased are St. Patrick, St. Brigid, St. Enda, and the patron saint of the island.

The Devil is thought to command power for evil as great as or greater than that of the Virgin Mary and the saints for good. Some believe that he controls malevolent pagan beings as well as his own minions from Hell, and he both tempts Christians to sin and attacks them bodily causing sickness, injury, and other misfortunes. He is abroad at all times, although his power is amplified on such occasions as Allhallows' Eve, and sometimes he can be seen by human eyes—as a huge, dark, indistinct figure standing at a distance, usually after nightfall or when it is raining heavily. One evening during a severe storm, I visited without advance notice a man milking his cow at the back of the island, and he would not approach me as I stood atop a fence wearing oilskin and sou'wester until I called out to him and established the fact that I was not the "big fellow" come to do him harm. Animals are especially sensitive to the presence of Satan, and asses which run about braying loudly are believed to have seen him.

The folk do not admit to dissent or skepticism as regards their Catholic faith, despite their anti-clerical attitudes, but skepticism can be inferred from many of their utterances. Most doubt centers around the reality of the hereafter and its nature, if it exists. Invariably when I talked of religion with them, whether singly or in groups, my own views of the afterworld were solicited eagerly, and such remarks as the following, pronounced with anxiety, were forthcoming from them: "Is there really a life after death?", "Will we meet relatives there?", "Is it bodies or souls that live in Heaven?", "If we all meet in Heaven, won't it be too crowded?", "How could God be so cruel as to put people in a big fire?", and "Sure, no one has ever returned to tell of the afterlife." The most public expression of skepticism that my wife and I encountered was in a pub when she was requested to sing "Galway Bay" before a crowd of boisterous men; after she sang the line, "And if